

# THE MORNING STAR AND Catholic Messenger.

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"HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THEM THAT BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"

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MORNING STAR AND CATHOLIC MESSENGER.

NEW ORLEANS, SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 1868.

[For the Morning Star.]

## THE CHURCH OF GOD.

BY IONIA.

My fancy stands on Time's dim shore,  
Beyond which rolls the sea.  
Mysterious, dread, and stretching on  
Throughout eternity.  
Upon it sails full many a bark  
Of wandering human thought:  
For some, its gales seem filled with hope;  
For some, with fears are fraught.

There is a rock upon that shore,  
Whose harbor braves the gale,  
Against whose ships, with spirit crews,  
No blasts of hell prevail.  
Joy fills my soul for safety near  
Until, alas, the grief—  
I think of my once swelling lips,  
The past—its unbelief.

Be still ye waves, as on that night  
Christ calmed the raging sea,  
And leave my heart as best as those  
Dear waves of Galilee!  
Behold! I stretch imploring hands  
To where His feet have trod:  
Save me through that unfailing rock  
Where stands "The Church of God."

[Written for the Morning Star.]

## LOST FAITH;

OR,

## THE TWO SISTERS.

BY JACQUELINE.

CHAPTER IV.

A few weeks after the conversation detailed above, Mr. Stewart surprised his wife very much one day, by asking her: "How she would like to try her hand at housekeeping?"

"I don't know how you feel, my love," he said, "but I, for one, am heartily tired of this kind of life, where you see the same things to eat every day, where everything is so cooked and served as to prevent even the most vivid imagination from dreaming of variety; and where you have to encounter a hundred pair of strange eyes every time you want to put something into your mouth."

"Oh, Charles!" exclaimed Kate with delight, "it is the very thing I have been longing for; but I didn't like to propose it, because I feared you wouldn't be comfortable under such a novice in the mysteries of housekeeping, as I fear I shall prove to be. That is a part of my education, you know, that has been sadly neglected; but, with a good will, a great deal of ambition, and the incomparable Miss Leslie, of whose wonderful assistance I have heard young housekeepers expatiate upon with so much gratitude, I am sure, if you will only have patience with me, that I shall get along very nicely."

"Never fear that, Kate," said her husband, patting the little hand that lay within his own; "but the next consideration is the amount of money necessary; for you see, it would be against my interest to draw too large a sum out of my business just now; and yet, you have been accustomed to so many little dainties at home, with so much style and superfluity, that I am sure you will not be content with a meagre allowance on all your wants, that I fear my little wife would not be content with a meagre allowance on a small scale now."

"Indeed, Charles, you have a poor idea of how little I care for anything beyond positive comfort and good taste; and I am sure that you have both the means and generosity sufficient to indulge these. Beside, you know that I have an abundance of handsome bed and table linen given me by mamma; then all my silver, too, that papa gave me; and, in addition to these valuables, I have a few hundred dollars laid away, that papa has been sending me for pin money, and for which I have had no use; so let us have the house just as quick as possible, and bid a joyous adieu to our six months' probation of hotel life."

So it was all settled, and a few weeks Kate found herself in a house which, without any ostentatious display, yet afforded every imaginable comfort for the bodies she wanted, and greeted her with such a pleasant sense of perfect order, harmony in color and ornament, that made this little home a perfect *bijou* to look upon and enjoy.

Mrs. Field had been indefatigable in aiding Kate in her labors, and never lost an opportunity of a suggestive word on the all-important subject that never left her thoughts. Thus, on one occasion, when the two friends went out making purchases together, she urged Kate to buy a very pretty little statuette of the Blessed Virgin and an ivory crucifix, both of which she had placed in Mrs. Stewart's dressing-room, on a bracket, which answered the purpose of a miniature altar. By the side of these she laid her prayer-book, "Testament, and" Kempis, and trusted much to the daily presence of these sacred and associative memorials to keep, at least, the remembrance of her faith green in heart. With the exception of an occasional attendance at high mass with Mrs. Field, Kate never ventured to invoke her husband's ire by any allusion to the forbidden subject, and since he had sought an occasion to talk to her on the confessional, and lay his solemn prohibition on its practice, she had never dared disobey him; so, thus she now lived entirely outside of the performance of her religious duties.

A few months after being settled in her new home her first child was born, but her happiness was marred by the fear of Mr. Stewart raising objections to the baptism of her infant, which fears, when she summoned courage to speak on the subject, were fully realized.

"Infant baptism is all nonsense, Kate," said Mr. Stewart, "an invention of the Church to work on the fears of the ignorant. It will be time enough when the child is of an age to judge and choose for himself; then the ceremony is proper enough as an initiation into his new faith."

So, this point, like all others, was quietly yielded, merely for the want of a little moral courage. For the want of nerve to stand one contest, one storm that, after all, could have been but temporary in effect, this weak woman preferred to risk, both for herself and infant, an eternal loss.

Thus, in all other externals, time passed smoothly, pleasantly on for Kate, who, without resistance, suffered herself to float with the calm surface-current of her life. Occupied with her infant, who was an unending source of delight to her; busied with her household arrangements and her needle, taking very little interest either in general or fashionable society; only caring to entertain or be entertained in a social, unceremonious way, she soon settled down into that hum-drum life, devoid of all culture and development that is the common taste and habit of the generality of American women. Of late, she had received accounts from home that served to make her feel somewhat anxious. Her dear father's health was reported as failing, and there seemed to be troubles and losses, growing out of unfortunate speculations, which made her mother very unhappy and anxious. There also came the news of her sister's marriage; and she was greatly surprised to learn that her love of wealth, and ambition for a high position in the world, had yielded to the elevating influences of a true and deep affection, and she had given her hand to a man who could only promise her a competency in the present, but if life and health were spared, and prospects realized, might eventually be able to give her all she coveted. Mr. Talmadge was, unfortunately, her father's wife, a Protestant; but very liberal, and quite willing to assure Mr. O'Brien of his full co-operation in all his wishes, for which, this time, he took good care to secure promises in advance; so that Nellie should never, he said, run the risks that he feared had been the portion of his dear Kate.

The birth of Mrs. Stewart's second child was now approaching, and she had been very feeble and dispirited for some time. The nurse of little Dennis had been with her since she first went to housekeeping, and had ever proved herself a faithful servant and good Christian. Being unusually depressed one morning, and feeling the need of some strong arm upon which to lean, some one to whom she could look for aid, she turned in despair to this humble servant-woman, and said:

"Bridget, you have lived with me a long time, now, and I believe I may count on your attachment and fidelity."

"Indeed, then, mam, them's the truest words you ever spoke," replied Bridget, quite pleased, and awake to what was to follow.

"Well, Bridget," continued Mrs. Stewart, "I am going to ask a favor of you, because of all others, you will have the best opportunity of granting it. Perhaps you don't know it, Biddy, but I am a Catholic."

"The Lord in Heaven be merciful to us!" exclaimed Biddy. "It is little of the sort I have ever seen about you, mam, save the little images and books that lay in the room beyond; and sure I've often wondered to myself what business they had there, with never a cruther, barring myself, to wipe the dust and the mould off them."

"You are mistaken there, Biddy," replied Mrs. Stewart. "I have them in my hands often than you think, but I dare not let my husband see me thus occupied."

"Sure it's not of him, mam, that God will ask your soul."

"Well, it is too late now to talk about what is past," said Mrs. Stewart. "What I want of you, Bridget, is to promise me that if I am in any danger in my coming sickness, that you will go either for the bishop or Father C—, to be with me."

"Indeed, then, Mrs. Stewart, crany, I will do that same, never fear. But oh, mam, begging your pardon for the liberty of giving the likes of you advice," continued Biddy, with great earnestness; "why wont you make your heart light, and your conscience easy, by going to the bishop yourself, before the time of your trouble comes?"

"I can't, I dare not, Biddy," said Mrs. Stewart, greatly agitated. "I am under a promise to my husband never to go to confession, and I can't deceive him by breaking it."

"And sure, mam, didn't you make the first promise to God in your baptism and first communion, and isn't He the most to be considered and feared; for sure, your husband can only be angry, and, may be, speak a few hot words, but the Lord save us, what be they to the fire of hell. Oh, mam," continued Bridget, now quite roused, "it is a dreadful thing to live outside of the Church; but the Lord and His Holy Mother defend us, it's twice more awful to die out of it."

"Don't talk about it, Bridget," said Mrs. Stewart, pale with suppressed agitation; "only promise me that such an evil sha'n't befall me."

"It sha'n't, indeed, mam, if I can help it," sadly responded Bridget. "But, mayhap, the devil may circumvent all my plans," bit saying a frightened expression on Mrs. Stewart's face, she quickly added, "But never fear, mam, I'll do me endeavors to help you, and I'll bring the bishop or the praste, if me head turns as white as a piece of chalk in the effort."

buoyed up by the hopes that grew out of this assurance, Kate became more cheerful, and by degrees threw off the gloomy forebodings that had so long oppressed her; and when a few days after Mrs. Field called to see her, and begged her to prepare herself for any contingency that might arise, she assured her of Biddy's promise, and thus lulled herself into security against all future danger, and showed no disposition to listen either to the warning or argument of her friend, waving all present points by promising her, after her health was again restored, to make a brave stand against all further opposition in the future. Days and

weeks thus passed in alternate changes of cheerful and depressed spirits, and Biddy, who now looked at her mistress with more anxious eyes, watched her closely, and found that she was often in her dressing-room alone, and the prayer books were moved every day from the position in which Biddy purposely arranged them in the morning.

At length the hour of trial arrived, and a little daughter was given to these two hearts, so united on all points save one; but that one, acting with its numberless chilling influences and repelling effects, was like an iceberg that comes suddenly down upon a calm sea that is heaving and sparkling under the radiance of a glorious July sun.

Mrs. Stewart was doing so well that all thought of any future danger was entirely banished from the minds of her friends, when, on the third day, strange and serious symptoms of puerperal fever, then but little known, and even now difficult to manage, became only too apparent to those who had watched her most anxiously.

Biddy was on the *qui vive* day and night, but the delirium and prostration attendant upon the disease succeeded each other in such rapid succession, and the order for perfect quiet was so imperative, no one being allowed to enter her room but Mr. Stewart, the nurse, and the physician, that there was no opportunity for Biddy to act as she desired. At length the ninth day arrived, and knowing that some change had taken place, Biddy watched and waited for the doctor as he came down stairs, and asked eagerly, with tears in her eyes: "Was the madam better, or was she worse?"

The doctor had known Bridget a long time as a good and valued servant, and appreciating her affection for Mrs. Stewart, told her very quietly that there was no hope, and that only a few hours of life remained to her. Stunned as she was by the verdict, she lost not a moment in putting on her bonnet and starting for the bishop's house, but the way was long, and as there were neither omnibuses nor street cars in that day, a long time was consumed in the errand.

As the doctor was getting into his buggy, he was accosted by an intimate friend of Mrs. Stewart, who, learning the sad intelligence of Mrs. Stewart's danger, made it her business to go at once for Dr. Beechwood, believing that such a precaution would be acceptable to her friends.

In the meanwhile Kate's mind had become lucid, and the titill struggle of a dying flame had given evidence of reviving strength. Her husband hung over her in an agony of suppressed grief, and looking up into his face, she saw and read her doom. With supernatural will she roused her waning faculties and spoke:

"I see, I understand it all, Charles. I am going to die, and must leave you and my darling, helpless little ones. I have given you of my love and duty; grant me, then, oh, my husband, in this, my last hour, the only consolation left me. Let me die, forgiven by God for all my faithlessness to Him! Now, in this awful moment, withdraw your injunctions, and send for the bishop, that I may have the consolations and assurances that only the sacraments of my own Church can give to me. For your sake, I have given up the service of God, oh, have pity on me, Charles, and let me, ere too late, have a chance to save my soul!"

She was too weak to say more, but kept her eyes fixed imploringly upon his face. Love and grief were at last about to triumph over prejudice and ignorance, and Mr. Stewart had relinquished the hand he held, saying, as he kissed her forehead:

"It shall be as you wish, love. I will send for—"

When, unannounced, to his great surprise, Dr. Beechwood walked quietly into the room. The impulse to perform this last act of justice was gone in a moment, and following Dr. Beechwood to the bedside, said:

"See, love, Providence has sent this good man to comfort you; and surely, Kate, his prayers and advice will aid you quite as much as any others."

The shock was so great to Mrs. Stewart, as her eyes opened upon the form of this man bending over her, that she was at once struck speechless, and she could only wave him off with her hands, whilst an expression of unutterable agony passed over her countenance, white face, and closed eyes, wholly undisturbed by this chilling reception, lost not a moment in launching forth into an extemporaneous prayer, in which he dwelt particularly upon the signal mercy of God in giving him the opportunity to rescue this soul from the clutches of the Evil One, and the abominable errors of Popery. While in the midst of a grand oratorical flourish, Biddy, followed by the bishop entered the room.

Mr. Stewart, who had been watching his wife rather than listening to the prayer, saw that a fearful change had taken place, and lost what remnant of hope he had before felt. Nearly crazed by his own emotions, he knew not, in this dilemma, what to do, but as he mechanically rose from his knees to receive the bishop, Dr. Beechwood, feeling his weakness, interposed himself between them, and at once took the settlement of future action in his own hands. The good bishop, understanding all, glanced the steps of the case, addressed himself to the Presbyterian divine, saying:

"I have been called here, sir, by the earnest request of that dying lady; and as I know that my ministrations are what her heart demands, and her soul requires, I beg that you will allow me to take your place at her side."

"You, sir," replied Dr. Beechwood, "have come here on a tacit sign from Mrs. Stewart, which that Irish woman interpreted into a request; but I, sir, have been sent here by God in advance of you, to save this poor soul now wavering in the balance between truth and error, knowledge and superstition. I shall not, therefore, reverend sir, give way, but will continue my exhortations for the comfort and salvation of her distracted soul."

The bishop was a gentleman, and a man of tender, delicate feelings; therefore, after a few more efforts that were met with a louder voice and more insulting language, he moved toward the door, and said:

"I cannot stand here, Dr. Beechwood, wrangling over the bed of a dying woman; but mark my words, sir, and weigh them well, if her soul is lost, God will require it of you when you stand before His judgment; for, devoid of all authority, you have robbed her of her own expressed desire to die in the bosom of that Church in which she was born."

Saying which, and turning a last inquiring look upon Mr. Stewart, who stood helpless between the two, he left the room. During this scene Biddy had slipped round by the bed, and placed the crucifix in Mrs. Stewart's hands, seeing by the expression of her eye that she was still conscious, though speechless.

Although unable to read, this poor woman was not at a loss for prayers in such an extremity. So putting her face close to the dying woman's ear, she repeated the litany for the dying, which she had long known by heart, and she had just concluded the verse: "When my soul shall be on my lips departing from this world, and shall leave my body cold and lifeless, then merciful Jesus, have pity on me," when Mrs. Stewart gave a start, followed by a long, heavy sigh, and fixing her eyes, first on the crucifix, then on her husband, who knelt by her side, she closed her eyes forever on time to open them on the pain or bliss of eternity.

Well is it for us who watch such lives, and witness such deaths, to know that the mercies of God are infinite, and to recall when fear and doubt torture the loving heart, that scene of the long, long ago, when a sinful, wicked man, whose life had been spent in breaking the divine law, whose lips had never uttered a prayer, whose heart was the receptacle of every bad passion, was suddenly overtaken by his hour of doom. Through torture and torment inexpressible, his iniquities clung to him like a part of himself, and as he writhed in the double agony of soul and body, suddenly his eyes fell upon the God-illumined face that hung by his side, and a voice more piercing and moving than the wind that rumbled that sounded the noon hour of that awful day, (as these notes never vibrated before or after) fell upon his ear, entered his soul, and made clear like a lightning's flash all the wickedness that had so long rioted unchecked therein. Like a fountain in the desert, love for this patient sufferer suddenly welled up in his heart, and through its light he beheld the divinity that enclosed him in a halo of glory. Moved by faith, love, and repentance, this poor sinner cried out for salvation, and with that one word, the evil of the past was forgotten, the robes of his wickedness fell off like the mantle of Elias, and he entered with the Son of God into glory. Therefore, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," stands emblazoned on a shining cloud that hangs between the repentant sinner and eternity.

When all was over, Bridget sent a last message to Mrs. Field, hoping that through her influence her beloved mistress might at last be accorded the rites of burial in consecrated grounds, but Mr. Stewart's friends had already made every arrangement, and when Mrs. Field spoke to the bereaved husband on the subject of paying this last tribute to the feelings of his wife, he said:

"It is too late, now, to interfere. Beside, what matters it now who consigns her to earth, or where she lies? She has gone now beyond all hopes or desires for this world, and the anguish is mine alone."

The good bishop, knowing what a double blow this sad death of his daughter would prove to Mr. O'Brien, strove to give him, by offer, all the consolation in his power. Although he made no attempt to excuse her past dereliction from duty, he yet seized upon the good desires of the last few weeks of her life; dwelt upon her frequent prayers, her solicitude for an opportunity of reconciliation, her dying appeal to her husband, all of which, joined to the ministrations of Dr. Beechwood, he believed would be weighed in her favor by our all merciful Lord.

CHAPTER V.

Poor Kate had laid many days in her grave ere the news of her sad end reached her loving parents. Only a few days previously they had heard of her comparative safety, and not having the slightest idea of her danger, the blow fell heavily upon them both, but more especially upon Mrs. O'Brien, whose remorseful conscience added to the awful misery to her loss, and proved the means of setting the final seal to her withdrawal from duty, he yet seized upon the good desires of the last few weeks of her life; dwelt upon her frequent prayers, her solicitude for an opportunity of reconciliation, her dying appeal to her husband, all of which, joined to the ministrations of Dr. Beechwood, he believed would be weighed in her favor by our all merciful Lord.

Upon the settlement of his affairs it was found that only a small annuity, through the consideration of his creditors, could be secured to Mrs. O'Brien during her life; but as she was allowed to retain nearly every article that had been endeared to her by long association, and had the heart and home of her remaining child still open to her, she was content to accept these blessings in the true spirit of a chastened soul, offering the rest of her life as an atonement for her past false and foolish use of blessings and opportunities for good, that rarely fall to the lot of those whose birth was such as hers.

Nellie, now Mrs. Talmadge, though grieved at the death of both father and sister, rebelled even more against the loss of her great expectations. The first ardor and romance of her marriage had subsided into feelings more practical than ideal; and her natural love for luxury, position, and all the concomitants that abundant wealth can bring, rankled ceaselessly, and almost totally annihilated the happiness that was still afforded her in the devotion and goodness of her husband, and the sweet endearments of her

little girl. Nellie had never given any evidence of much natural piety, though, in her youth, she had kept to the letter of the law in the fulfillment of her religious duties. Each year, however, as she advanced in life, found her more indifferent; and only to please her mother did she seemingly care to keep up even the appearance of fidelity in such things.

About a year succeeding these sad events, Mr. Talmadge was called by pressing business to a journey of a few days up the river. He parted reluctantly from his little family, for he loved his home, and felt unwilling to leave it even for a few weeks. Alas! those anticipated weeks were lengthened into an eternity; for one of those terrible accidents, so frequent in our waters, happened to the boat upon which he embarked; and, in a moment, without time for thought or word, his, with numberless other souls, was hurled into eternity.

The agony of his wife, when the news reached her, was wild and convulsive. For a time, she sought solace in prayer; but her temperament was naturally so rebellious, that she failed to find the consolations which come so mercifully to the more regulated and trusting heart; and thus, she put upon God the blame which rested solely within herself.

Alone, with two little ones, the youngest an infant boy of a few weeks, with barely means enough to last, with close economy, more than two years, at the most; young and inexperienced, her trial was indeed a hard one; but she made it even greater by the uncontrolled, rebellious spirit with which she met it. Her mother did all in her power to console her, and induce a more Christian and philosophical view of her situation. Mr. Stewart wrote her letters of condolence, and offered her any assistance she needed—offered it, too, in such words of generous sympathy and interest, that she felt they were not a mere empty form, but could be accepted and relied upon, if her necessities demanded the obligation.

By degrees, under the soothing hand of time, the weight grew lighter, and she carried her burden less complainingly. Her mother's health was now failing, and demanded much of her care and time; and thus, the dread of a new trial absorbed somewhat the grief of the old. These fears were realized within the following year, by the death of a mother, whose very faults seemed virtues to her, merged as they were in a life of unselfish devotion and ceaseless love; and, as she was carried away from her sight forever, a gloom far darker than she had yet known settled like a funeral pall upon her soul, and for many, many weeks she refused all consolation and companionship from sympathizing friends; and even the necessities of her little ones failed to rouse her from this woe. At length, the settlement of affairs compelled her to look over Mrs. O'Brien's effects, and her grief was renewed when she found that in the fullness of her mother's love for her, she had sacrificed many of her own treasures and wants in order to lay by quite a nice little sum of money as a legacy for her future needs.

The winter following Mrs. O'Brien's death, Mr. Stewart made his first visit to New Orleans after an absence of several years. Associated so closely as he was with the memories of her last sister, Mrs. Talmadge welcomed him warmly and received him as a brother in her home. She felt no hesitation in giving him her full confidence regarding her business, and asking his advice for her future course in the management of her affairs. In one of these conversations, a few weeks previous to his return home, he offered her a proposition of marriage.

"I cannot bear, Nellie," he said, "to have you so isolated, and so much in need of a strong arm to lean upon. My home is also desolate, and my children need a mother; and who can so well supply that place, Nellie, as the sister of her who is gone. I make you no wild professions of love, for all such feelings are buried; but I can offer you a comfortable home, with a sincere affection, accompanied by an earnest desire to promote your happiness."

Seeing Mrs. Talmadge about to reply, he continued:

"Don't give me your answer, now, Nellie, for I see how such a proposition has startled you; but take time to think over it, and let me know by letter your conclusions."

And she did think over it, and weighed it in all its bearings; and, by degrees, the worldly advantages of the connection suppressed all the remnant of a conscientious scruple that would force themselves into these private council chambers.

True, she had no love to give Mr. Stewart; she was not by nature gifted with much sensibility, and what she possessed had been lavished upon her husband. "What matters it, then," she argued, "who the object be, provided he can secure to me and my children all that I most love and covet in this world; and, as I like Charles as well as any one else, and he is growing to be a rich man, I should be a fool not to accept him." So, she wrote him to this effect, and the early fall was settled upon for the fulfillment of her promise.

Upon the return of Mr. Stewart to New Orleans, when the preliminaries of this business arrangement had all been settled, he said, with some appearance of agitation:

"There is one more point upon which I have not touched, Nellie, trusting that you would relieve me of the necessity. The subject was such a source of trial in my first marriage, and is so fraught with bitter and remorseful memories, that I never wish to allude to it. Need I say that it is religion? I want to relieve your mind in advance, by telling you that my views have undergone a very great change; that Catholicism occupies a far more exalted position in my judgment than formerly; and, that I not only give my free and full consent to your un molested practice of its requirements, but am also willing that my children—Kate's little ones—may be brought up in the same. Indeed, they are already somewhat initiated, for Biddy has been faithful to the memory of their dear mother."

The face of Mrs. Talmadge turned crimson at this unexpected confession; and, for an instant, shame for her own faithlessness overcame her. But, quickly recovering her equanimity, she replied:

[To be Continued.]